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Questions persist about Israeli attack on USS Liberty naval ship that killed 34 American crew members

10/24/2023 // Cassie B. // **4.9K** Views



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As the U.S. continues to offer unwavering support for Israel in its war against Hamas terrorists, it is important to remember that this support has not always been mutual – with one of the most egregious examples being when Israel tried to sink the *USS Liberty*, a noncombatant naval technical research vessel, killing 34 American crew members who were on board. However, many Americans are unfamiliar with what went down on that dark day 56 years ago thanks to efforts by the government and the corporate media to cover it up.

The [attack on the *USS Liberty*](#) in international waters off the northern Sinai coast has been shrouded in controversy and secrecy ever since it occurred. Some survivors maintain that it was a deliberate attack by the Israelis, and some former senior intelligence officials agree with their assessment. However, U.S. and Israeli officials have long insisted it was an accident.

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An unprovoked attack on a noncombatant naval ship

The *USS Liberty*, which was under the command of the National Security Agency (NSA), had been sent to the area to [monitor events](#) taking place around the front lines of the Six-Day War in Egypt and Syria.

On June 8, 1967, an Israeli aircraft conducting routine reconnaissance patrols across the Mediterranean spotted the ship and was reportedly unable to determine its country of origin. The *USS Liberty* reported that an unknown aircraft was circling it shortly thereafter, and they contacted command to report that they would destroy sensitive documents they had on board with them to prevent them from being captured.



After that, the ship found itself being [slammed by torpedoes in a two-hour attack](#) that also saw bombs and napalm being dropped on it. As an intelligence gathering ship, it was unprepared to defend itself and was only lightly armed, and its distress signals were blocked by Israeli forces. Survivors have reported that the Israeli aircraft that attacked them were unmarked, and they deliberately strafed their life rafts. A total of 34 Americans died and 174 were injured.

Israel eventually apologized for the attack and took full responsibility for it. They said that in the flurry of action in the Six-Day War, they initially mistook it for an Egyptian ship. They also gave nearly \$13 million (which would be around \$117 million today) to the U.S. to compensate for the incident, covering the ship's damage as well as restitution for the families of the soldiers who were wounded and killed.

However, many survivors have a hard time buying the Israeli claim that they could not confirm the ship's country of origin. After all, it was flying an American flag and labeled "*USS Liberty*" on the hull.

In fact, one crew member, Larry Weaver, reported interacting with an Israeli air force co-pilot as he flew above their mast. "I was actually able to wave to the co-pilot. He waved back and actually smiled at me - I could see him that well. There's no question about it. They had seen the ship's markings and the American flag. They could damn near see my rank. The underway flag was definitely flying, especially when you're that close to a war zone," he explained.

Why would Israel deliberately attack the *USS Liberty*?

On the surface, some people might be willing to accept the official narrative that it was an accident. The U.S. has been a good friend to Israel, and it's hard to imagine them wanting to incur the wrath of America, particularly at such a sensitive moment in their history.

But some survivors and American officials believe there are compelling reasons [it could have been deliberate](#). Some suspect the Israelis wanted to prevent the listening devices on the ship from overhearing them discuss their plans to seize and occupy the Golan Heights in Syria, an event that occurred the day after the attack. Israel may have known that American radio signals were being intercepted by the Soviets, who would then inform Egypt that Israel had left the Egyptian border undefended by moving its troops to the Golan Heights.

Another popular theory is that Israel wanted to drag America into the war on the Israeli side, carrying out the attack hoping the U.S. would believe either Egyptian or other Arab forces were responsible for it.

Perhaps the most unsettling possibility, however, is that they wanted to [cover up](#) the mass killing of Egyptian prisoners of war in El Arish, a city in the northern Sinai. This theory was put forth by journalist James Bamford, although some national security experts insist that Egyptian POWs were never killed.

Closed-door inquiries and cover-ups

We may never know what really happened. The investigation proceedings by the Navy Court of Inquiry were held behind closed doors, and the survivors who were on board the ship during the attack were issued gag orders that prevented them from discussing what happened.

However, classified documents that were leaked by NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden show that there is much more to the story. They do not point definitively to what caused the attack, but they do show that the NSA was determined to ensure that the details remained classified, even several decades after it happened.

They also show that the NSA had a classified Hebrew transliteration system, indicating that Israel was an intelligence target despite serving as a partner to the U.S. in signals collection. In fact, Hebrew translators were on board the *USS Liberty* and were referred to as “special Arabic” linguists, which some believe was meant to hide the fact that they were surveilling Israeli communications.

Adding fuel to the fire is the fact that [there appears to be a media coverup](#). The incident is rarely mentioned in the mainstream media, and a series of interviews conducted by ABC’s *Nightline* with survivors never ended up making it to air, with host Ted Koppel claiming they didn’t find anything “substantive.”

Officials don't believe "outrageous" attack was an accident

Why is there still so much secrecy surrounding the incident? Just how soon did the Israeli forces realize they were attacking the U.S. Navy, and if it really was a case of mistaken

identity, why did they not stop immediately once it became clear they were killing Americans?

Although many government officials have parroted the official line that the incident was accidental, some have [gone on the record stating otherwise](#). NSA Deputy Director Oliver Kirby was convinced Israel knew the ship was not Egyptian, stating: "I can tell you for an absolute certainty (from intercepted communications) that the Israelis knew they were attacking an American ship."

The U.S. Secretary of State at the time, Dean Rusk, said that he "was never satisfied with the Israeli explanation," adding: "I [didn't believe them](#) then, and I don't believe them to this day. The attack was outrageous."

Sources for this article include:

[TheIntercept.com](#)

[Military.com](#)

[Goodfellow.AF.mil](#)

[HistoryNewsNetwork.org](#)

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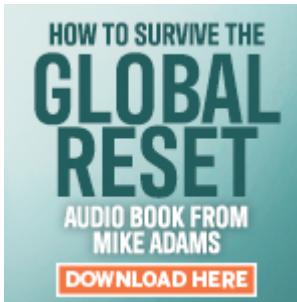
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Remember the USS Liberty.

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